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Midair! Midair!

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DINGO: "DINGBAT TOWER, THIS IS DINGO-1."

TOWER: "DINGO-1, DINGBAT TOWER."

DINGO: "AH-ROGER-AH, WE'RE DOWN OVER THE RIVER HERE AT ABOUT AH--- 040, AH I SAY AGAIN, ON THE 230 AT ELEVEN HERE, AH----WE JUST HAD A CONTACT WITH A LIGHT AIRCRAFT HERE."

TOWER: "UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION IS 230 AT ELEVEN MILES."

DINGO: "IT WAS ABOUT AH -- AH -- A FEW MINUTES AGO HERE AND HE SEEMS TO BE FLYING OK, BUT AH -- WE CAUGHT HIM ON THE EDGE OF OUR WING TIP AND LOOKS LIKE ON THE EDGE OF HIS WING TIP-----AND HE APPEARS TO BE TURNING BACK TOWARD BASE. WE JUST LOST SIGHT OF HIM HERE, AND HE WAS FLYING OK."

TOWER: "ROGER AH -- DINGO, WHAT IS YOUR CONDITION, YOU OK?"

DINGO: "AH, THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE, WE HAVE A SKIN TEAR IN THE INBOARD OF THE LEFT TIP ABOUT TWO AND A HALF FEET, AND THAT'S ALL APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY DAMAGE, WE HAVE FULL CONTROL."

TOWER: "UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE RIPPED SOME SKIN OFF THE AIRCRAFT, ARE YOU DECLARING AN EMERGENCY AT THIS TIME?"

DINGO: "AH, THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE, WE'LL... GO AHEAD AND DECLARE AN EMERGENCY."

TOWER: "OK, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY AT THIS TIME. AH LANDING RUNWAY 17 ALTIMETER 29.90, WINDS ARE 270 DEGREES AT 4, REPORT STRAIGHT IN RUNWAY 17 IF POSSIBLE OVER."

MIDAY

DINGO: "AH ROGER, WE'RE TRYING TO KEEP AN EYE ON THIS OTHER AIRCRAFT HERE FIRST, AND HE'S TURNED AROUND NOW AND APPEARS TO BE FLYING TOWARDS LEGHORN POINT."

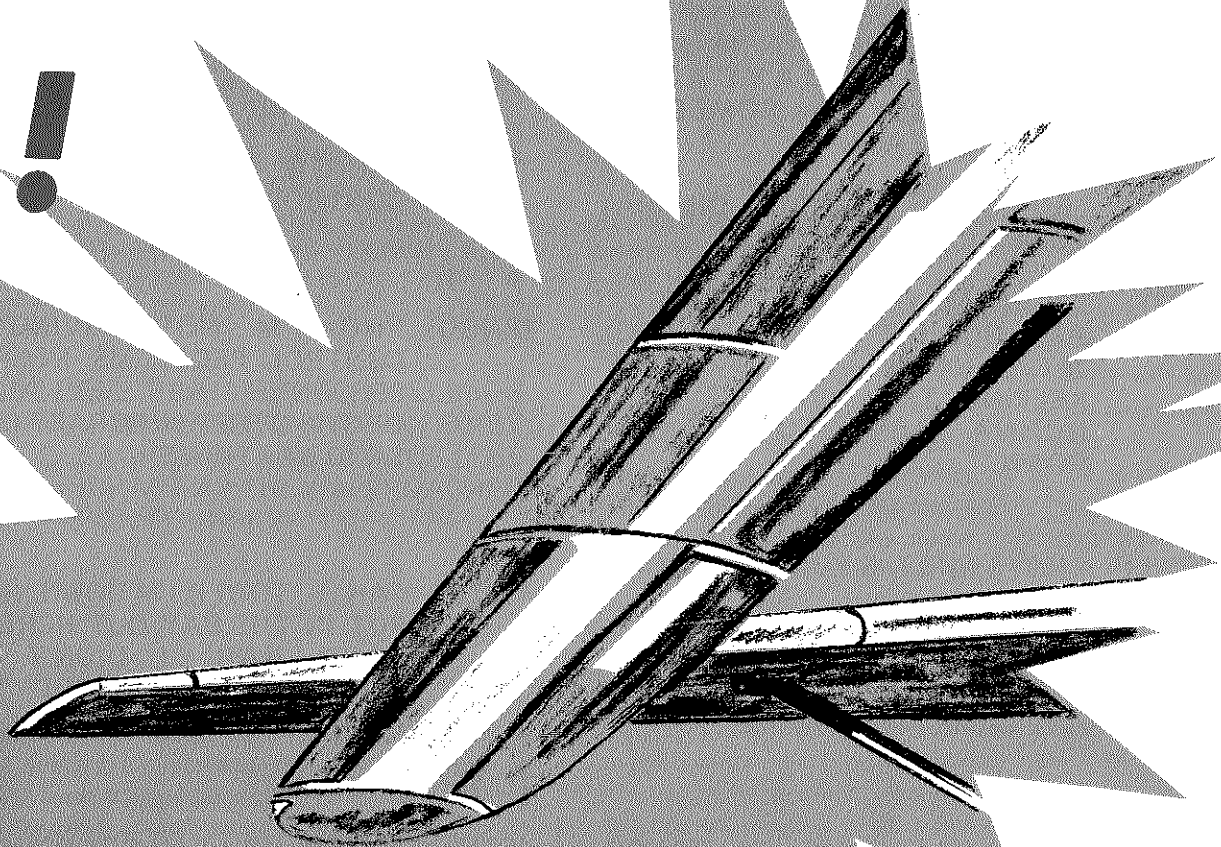
TOWER: "OK, AND HE'S HEADED TOWARDS LEGHORN POINT AT PRESENT TIME, AND WHAT IS YOUR POSITION RIGHT NOW SO RADAR TO MARK IT ON THE SCOPE, OVER."

DINGO: "AH ROGER WE HAVE A DEAD PARROT, BUT WE ARE DIRECTLY OVER AH ABOUT 2½ MILES NORTH OF LEGHORN POINT, AT THE PRESENT TIME."

TOWER: "2½ MILES NORTH OF LEGHORN POINT AT THE PRESENT TIME, THANK YOU."

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MIDAIR ...

DINGO: "AND WE HAVE ENOUGH FUEL. WE'RE GOING TO STICK WITH HIM A FEW SECONDS AND SEE WHAT HE'S DOING, AND THEN WE'RE GOING UP ON COMMAND POST FREQUENCY."

4567T: "'MAYDAY MAYDAY — EMERGENCY — SOMEBODY ANSWER PLEASE."

TOWER: "AIRCRAFT ON 121.5 DINGBAT TOWER CAN I HELP YOU."

4567T: "YEAH, MAYDAY, AH...TOWER... I JUST GOT HIT BY A DAMN FOOL JET... HAVIN' A HELL OF A TIME KEEPING THE WINGS LEVEL... GONNA HAVE TO PUT HER DOWN."

TOWER: "4567T WHAT IS YOUR POSITION?"

4567T: "GARbled.. AH... SAW THIS AIRPLANE IN A RIGHT TURN AND THEN HE TURNED TO THE LEFT AND CAME RIGHT AT ME..."

TOWER: "COPY ALL THAT 67 TANGO, WHAT IS YOUR POSITION.. OVER."

4567T: "AH... POSITION... COAST... CLOSE TO THE WATER.... HAVIN' A TOUGH TIME KEEPIN THE RIGHT WING UP... DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, I WAS UNDER RADAR CONTACT... AH..."

DINGO: "DINGBAT TOWER, HOW DO YOU READ DINGO?"

TOWER: "DINGO, LOUD AND CLEAR, HOW ME?"

DINGO: "AH, ROGER, AND THAT GUY TOOK IT OVER AND AH, IS AH, IT LOOKS LIKE HE IS A SEA PLANE AH, I TAKE THAT BACK HE'S AH, AH HE'S DITCHING THAT THING ON THE EDGE DOWN THERE, JUST AT LEGHORN POINT."

TOWER: "UNDERSTAND HE'S DITCHING THE AIRCRAFT AT LEGHORN POINT ON THE BEACH."

DINGO: "ROGER, HE HAS DITCHED, HE'S ON THE EDGE OF A SAND BAR."

TOWER: "ROGER, ARE YOU HAVING ANY CONTROL PROBLEMS?"

DINGO: "NO I'M NOT HAVING ANY CONTROL PROBLEMS, NEGATIVE. PERSONNEL ARE GETTING OUT OF THE OTHER AIRCRAFT ON THE SAND BAR NOW."

4567T: "AH... TOWER I'M DOWN. HAD TO PUT IN THE BAY OUT HERE ON A SAND BAR, I DIDN'T HURT ANYBODY... EVERYBODY'S ALL RIGHT."

TOWER: "ROGER."

4567T: "SEE IF YOU CAN GET SOMEBODY TO HELP US OFF THIS BAR WILL YOU."

TOWER: "A HELICOPTER IS ON ITS WAY, SIR."

TOWER: "DINGO, DO YOU REQUIRE A HELICOPTER?"

DINGO: "AH YOU MAY AS WELL HAVE ONE STANDING BY UNLESS HE'S TIED UP PICKING UP THOSE PEOPLE BUT IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE IS GOING OUT TO GET THEM ALREADY WITH A BOAT."

TOWER: "ROGER DINGO, WE HAVE CONTACT WITH THE LIGHT CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT ON THE SAND BAR AND EVERYONE IS OK ON THE AIRCRAFT."

DINGO: "AH, THANK YOU."

TOWER: "THE HELICOPTER IS STANDING BY HERE."

DINGO: "AND TOWER THIS IS DINGO WE HAVE CHECKED THE AIRCRAFT OUT FOR CONTROL ABILITY AND IT CHECKS GOOD THROUGH ALL RANGES THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM... WE'LL MAKE A DESCENDING TURN WITH OUR GEAR AND FLAPS DOWN AND COMING AROUND FOR A STRAIGHT IN."

IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE COLLISION COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN PREVENTED BY PROPER CLEARING BY EITHER OF THE SUBJECT AIRCRAFT AS THEY APPROACHED ON A COLLISION COURSE.

This accident was caused by a failure of the pilots in both the military aircraft and the civilian aircraft to observe the see and avoid principle. The military pilot did not see the light aircraft until it was too late to do anything about it. The light aircraft pilot saw the military aircraft but took no evasive action.

The military aircraft was returning to home base after a simulated ground attack mission. The IFF was dead. Initially the aircraft rolled out on a heading about 15 degrees too far to the right. A shallow bank to the left was established to get on the correct heading. Shortly after, the windscreen became filled with an object. Left aileron and back stick were applied then the collision occurred.

The civil aircraft was on a VFR flight at hemispheric altitudes under radio and radar contact with the center for flight following. It is believed that the light aircraft pilot's confidence in radar advisories and a VFR hemispheric altitude for traffic separation discouraged proper clearing and evasive action at a time when it would have prevented the accident.

Each year the total numbers of aircraft occupying the airspace in which we earn our bread and butter increase . . . and into that horde we plunge.

Some of us are complacent enough to think that because we're on an IFR clearance we're protected. Not true . . . you may have separation from other IFR traffic but no separation is provided from VFR traffic. FAR 91.67 Right-of-way rules states: "When weather conditions permit, regardless of whether an operation is conducted under Instrument Flight Rules or Visual Flight Rules, vigilance shall be maintained by each person operating an aircraft so as to see and avoid other aircraft . . ."

Since the Near Midair Collision Report of 1968 was published some changes have been put into effect to reduce the possibility of midairs. The 250 kt speed limit below 10,000 feet MSL is an example. Another example is the Phase I, II, and III terminal radar service that has been put into effect at many air traffic hubs. (See Flip)

Electronic devices for detection of other aircraft are being developed but a practical all-encompassing application of these devices is still down the road.

What about you and me? What can we do to prevent midairs? The quote from the Near Midair Collision Report of 1968, "A hazardous near midair collision is largely the result of (1) failure to observe good operating practices due to a lack of knowledge of the airspace environment, . . ."

Therein lies part of the answer . . . an adequate knowledge of the airspace environment in which we operate. Know the rules, follow them, and keep one thought continuously on the surface: the present most effective means to avoid a near midair collision is constant vigilance on the part of all pilots at all times under all circumstances.

It still rests squarely on the pilot's shoulders. ➔

